

VZCZCXRO2275
OO RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHIL #1123/01 1460117
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 260117Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2886
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0337
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0423
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 4942
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 1688
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 7288
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 6227
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 001123

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/05/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: CODEL LEAHY MEETS PRESIDENT ZARDARI

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) In a May 25 meeting with Codel Leahy, President Zardari described his recent trilateral meeting in Iran as being focused on controlling drug trafficking and expressed support for the Obama administration's outreach to Iran. Zardari asserted that he had political consensus for current Pakistani military operations in the Northwest Frontier Province, enthusiastically looked forward to improved relations with New Delhi in the wake of India's parliamentary elections, and welcomed U.S.-Pakistan-Afghanistan intelligence sharing to control cross-border militant movements. Zardari repeated his request for "drone technology so my forces can take out the militants." End Summary.

¶2. (C) Senators Patrick Leahy, Sheldon Whitehouse and Mark Warner, accompanied by Ambassador, met May 25 with President Asif Zardari. Also attending were: Daniel Ginsberg, Defense Aide for Senator Leahy, John Tracy, Staff Assistant for Senator Leahy, Mark Brunner, Legislative Assistant for Senator Warner, General Secretary for the Presidency Salman Farouqui, Attorney General Latif Khosa, Senator Syeda Sughra Imam, Presidential Spokesman Faratullah Babar, Interior Secretary Kamal Shah, MFA Additional Secretary for the Americas Attiyah Mahmood, and Polcouns (notetaker).

Iran

¶3. (C) Senator Leahy opened the meeting by asking about President Zardari's recent trip to Iran to attend a trilateral meeting with President Karzai. Zardari said the main focus was forging a combined effort to counter drug trafficking, a business worth \$5 million a day even before drugs hit the streets of Central Asia or Europe. This was, he said, more than my police and Army budget put together. The militants are paying \$60 per day to fight us in Swat and much of the funding comes from the drug trade. Zardari said there also as a discussion about Iran's offer to provide oil, gas and electricity to Pakistan. Under the Bush administration, it was not "PC" to discuss these things, but Pakistan desperately needs energy resources and no one else--especially the Saudis--are offering to help. Still, explained Zardari, "I need you more than anyone else, so I will take my cue from you. Perhaps now it will be possible to work with Iran on energy issues." (Note: The press reported May 25 that Zardari and Iranian President Ahmadinejad signed a declaration to support a gas pipeline agreement between the Iranian and Pakistani Oil Ministries.)

¶4. (C) Senator Whitehouse asked if Iran's nuclear weapons

program had been discussed; Zardari said no, "it didn't come up and I did encourage the discussion moving in that direction. Zardari opined that the Obama Administration's policy of engagement with Iran was a good one. Iran controlled the Straits of Hormuz and could create many problems for the West; dialogue was a better option than threats. He noted that a regional approach, including efforts to work with Turkey, India and Afghanistan, offered the best chance of progress with Iran on nuclear issues.

Anti-Militant Operations

15. (C) Senator Leahy noted that the delegation had just visited Iraq and would next visit Afghanistan where the U.S. was increasing troop levels and asked how this affected Pakistan. Zardari said he hoped the Senator would some day visit the border area, because 70 percent of the problem in controlling militancy could be explained by the rugged nature of the terrain; it was more difficult for Pakistan to control this border than it was for the U.S. to control its border with Mexico. He was pleased with the progress of military operations, but this was not just a positive development for the Army. The government had taken political ownership of the fight and now had consensus support from the parliament and popular support.

16. (C) The Pakistani Army was composed primarily of Punjabis, and historically Punjabi officers took the brunt of casualties in war, said Zardari. That was why it was so important that Pakistan Muslim League-N opposition leader

ISLAMABAD 00001123 002 OF 002

Nawaz Sharif supported the current operation. Within meetings like the recent All Parties Conference on the security situation, the political parties were on board with the government, explained Zardari. Outside the meeting, these parties might say other things to the media to appease their constituencies. Zardari noted that he had signed the Swat Nizam-e-Adl regulation only after receiving parliamentary support. There were small parties like Jamaat-e-Islami that opposed military action but they were in the minority.

17. (C) The other half of the equation, said Zardari, was caring for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) who now were "in pain" suffering from the hot weather and shortages of food and water. The real challenge, however, will be rebuilding areas after the conflict ends. Senator Leahy responded that this would take a long time; Zardari agreed but said "this is war." Senator Whitehouse asked for an estimate of what it would cost to rebuild; Zardari estimated \$3-4 billion and commented that this money must be spent transparently.

India

18. (C) Senator Warner asked if the election results in India would pave the way for improved Indo-Pakistan relations. Zardari emphatically said yes, and he had been the first to congratulate PM Singh after his victory. "I want the Indian market for Pakistan," said Zardari. Further, "today's war between us involves non-state actors; tomorrow's war will be about water in the Indus River system." Noting the Indian-Russian relations helps Pakistan, Zardari said he welcomed better U.S. relations with India after the collapse of the Soviet Union. "India and Pakistan can do great things together with U.S. help," asserted Zardari.

Afghanistan/Intelligence Sharing

19. (C) In response to Senator Leahy, Zardari said the recent trilateral meetings in Washington with President Karzai had been useful. He and Karzai had a much better relationship

than former President Musharraf had had with Karzai. Senator Whitehouse noted the importance of intelligence sharing to root out militants in the Pak-Afghan border area and asked Zardari if he would support deployment of troops along the border to prevent cross-border movement of militants. Zardari responded that Pakistan supported establishment of tripartite Border Coordination Centers, had built multiple border posts and had deployed 125,000 troops in the area. Still, these forces were insufficient to stop militant movements, cautioned Zardari.

¶10. (C) Zardari welcomed the acquisition of modern technology and said "give me the drones so my forces can take out the militants." That way, "we cannot be criticized by the media or anyone else for actions our Army takes to protect our sovereignty." Referring to a recent drone strike in the tribal area that killed 60 militants, Zardari reported that his military aide believed a Pakistani operation to take out this site would have resulted in the deaths of over 60 Pakistani soldiers. Zardari offered to give the delegation a Pakistani Air Force briefing on how it was using F-16s to attack caves where the taliban cached their weapons.

¶11. (U) Codel Leahy approved this message.
PATTERSON